DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 572 EA 017 070

TITLE Critical Issues in Elementary and Secondary Education: A Discussion Guide for Christians.
INSTITUTION National Council of Churches of Christ, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 43p.; Includes pamphlet: "A Call to the Churches to Engage the Issues of Public Education in Study and Action."
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Sales, National Council of Churches/Education in the Society Unit, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 710, New York, NY 10115-0050 ($2.50; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Christianity; *Churches; Church Responsibility; Church Role; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); Educational Assessment; Educational Benefits; Educational Finance; Educational Objectives; Educational Responsibility; *Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Materials; Local Issues; Moral Issues; Political Issues; *Public Education; Resource Materials; *Teaching Guides

ABSTRACT

This guide for discussing underlying issues in public elementary and secondary education was prepared for the purpose of encouraging and enabling conversation and action within and among local churches, and deals with the following six issues: (1) Whose understanding of education gives direction to educational activity? Whose goals prevail? (2) Who are the partners sharing educational work in our community? Who is responsible for education? (3) Who benefits or profits from education in the community? (4) Who pays for the education of children and youth in the community? (5) What methods, materials, and procedures are necessary for education in the community? and (6) How can we ascertain the quality of education in the community? For each issue, there are sections clarifying the issue, listing questions to help participants gain a local perspective on the issue, quoting statements about the issue from various church bodies, listing questions to help Christians consider their responsibilities, identifying resources for further study of the issue, and listing questions to help determine a course of action and advocacy; a feedback form for recording summaries of discussion outcomes is also provided. A pamphlet accompanying the guide identifies issues cited by recent national education reports and suggests that aspects of the issues be considered by churches. (Author/DCS)

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CRITICAL ISSUES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Discussion Guide for Christians

EA 017 020

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Published by Education in the Society
a program unit of the
Division of Education and Ministry
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115
1982

CRITICAL ISSUES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CHRISTIANS

Introduction

Education, especially elementary and secondary public education, is a topic of great concern to Christians in today's society. No one questions the importance of education, but many have come to question public schools. At issue, of course, is the welfare of our children and young people, and the continuation of our society as we know it and want it to be.

The future shape of this society depends on how we act or do not act on issues related to education and schooling. We act as individuals, as responsible Christian citizens, and as members of churches and other organizations. Our understanding of what is best and what we can accomplish continues to change and develop as we attempt to act.

These discussion materials have been prepared for the purpose of encouraging and enabling conversation and action within and among local churches. Designed for use by individuals and small groups, the discussion materials seek to raise some of the critical issues related to elementary and secondary education, identify resources useful in further study of the issues, and offer some "process questions" to assist local churches in determining a course of action and advocacy. Statements from various church bodies on elementary and secondary education are included to lend perspective.

The Study Materials and Their Use

The study materials consist of a discussion guide and a teaching packet. The *Discussion Guide* is divided into six sections, each one dealing with a particular issue, each issue significant enough to engage a small group in a one-hour discussion. Groups using the guide may wish to plan a six-session program around the study materials, or groups may select one or more issues for more extensive discussion. Discussion likely will be most fruitful if each person participating in the discussion sessions has a copy of the individual guide and is encouraged to work through the issue to be discussed prior to the group session. Individuals who have been asked to do their "homework" will experience one of the most abused dimensions of modern education. The six issues included in the guide are the following:

I. Whose understanding of education gives direction to education? Whose goals prevail?

II. Who are the partners sharing educational work in our community? Who is responsible for education?

III. Who benefits or profits from education in our community?

IV. Who pays for the education of children and youth in our community?

V. What methods, materials and procedures are necessary for education in our community?

VI. How can we ascertain the quality of education in our community?

The *Teaching Packet* contains six wall charts and a page of suggestions for leaders. The charts, in large print, present a teaching outline of the Discussion Guide and highlight the key questions for group discussion. While these same materials are covered more amply in the individual guides, the wall charts provide a visual resource which, if displayed prominently during small group discussions, will give a common focus for conversation. Further, display of the wall charts in a common meeting room or at an important church gathering may stimulate the thinking and concern of church members for elementary and secondary education and attract them to a formal discussion of the issues.

At the end of each section of this guide is a tear-out *Feedback Form*. Discussion leaders are encouraged to summarize discussion outcomes (or to collect completed forms from participants) and return them to the National Council of Churches of Christ's Unit on Education in the Society. (The return address is printed on the feed-back forms.) Your responses will be indispensable in at least two ways. First, they will inform a constituent committee as it begins to draft a new National Council of Churches of Christ Policy Statement on Elementary and Secondary Education for submission to the Council's Governing Board. Second, your comments and suggestions will assist Education in the Society and the member denominations of the NCCC as they seek to determine how they can better encourage and support local action with respect to building the future of education and schooling.

Forming and Leading a Study Group

Many people in your church and community have a personal or professional interest and a stake in the education of children and youth and therefore may be interested in forming or joining a study group to explore education and schooling and our Christian responsibility for it. You may wish to review your church's membership list and identify potential participants. You may wish to draw together people from across your community. Local Councils of Churches and ecumenical groupings would be ideal starting points. Interested people might include school and church educators, students and recent graduates, parents of children and youth, school board members and other public officials, persons who work professionally or voluntarily with children and youth, civic leaders, futurists, and other persons who are actively concerned about the welfare of your community.

The leadership role can be taken by anyone who has a recent, "first-hand," knowledge of elementary and secondary education – including many of those persons identified above – and who is skilled at facilitating discussion. In preparation for group discussion, the leader will want to review the materials in the study guide. Additional information and assistance will be available from the denomination's education office, a nearby university or seminary education department, local school officials, or professional and citizens' groups concerned with education.

I. WHOSE UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION GIVES DIRECTION TO EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY? WHOSE GOALS PREVAIL?

Clarifying the Issue

There is no universal and absolute definition of education. Out of diverse traditions and interests, people give different meanings to it. They approach the word "education" with different understandings. They have different expectations of what schools and other educational activities for children and youth should be about.

Among current understandings:

- Education is the social activity that develops the individual to his or her fullest potential. It helps the individual achieve self-fulfillment and a sense of wholeness or completeness. *Self-fulfillment is central.*
- Education develops the skills for participation in the broader social, political and economic life of the world. The goals range from training for economic self-sufficiency to socialization to the prevailing customs, manners, and norms of the community. *Preparation for life is key.*
- Education is preparing people to participate in the intellectual dimensions of a culture. *Intellectual achievement is paramount.*
- Education is preparation for leading a moral life. Adherents view the development of religious belief or a healthy value system as fundamental to all else. *Religious or moral values are primary.*
- Education is society's vehicle for the transmission of certain truths, values, or cultural forms, and these are given priority over individual needs and desires. *Enculturation is central.*
- Education is an activity wherein the rights of the individual are balanced against certain social, political, and economic responsibilities. *Preparation for citizenship is primary.*

Given such diverse understandings, community-wide agreement about the goals and purposes of public education is difficult and unlikely. Tensions and conflicts about goals exist. Decisions about whose goals prevail are always political decisions. They are arrived at differently in various communities.

- In some communities, educational directions are determined through the election of public officials and democratic processes of public debate.
- In some, educational directions are determined primarily by special interest groups and powerful elites (such as commercial enterprises, professional associations, teacher training institutions). Special interest groups may or may not be responsive to the public interest.
- In some, educational directions are established by teachers, administrators, and/or students. Rules, discipline, competency expectations and attitudes toward school work are worked out within the institutions.

Whose understanding of education gives direction to educational activity? Whose goals prevail? Who is responsible for translating into practice and evaluating practice in relation to goals? To answer these questions, we must understand the varying expectations which our neighbors have for education. Further, we must understand who in our community really determines the direction of educational activity, and how.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

Following are some questions which may help in focusing attention on your local community or school district.

Which description (or descriptions) stated above best describes your own understanding of the goals or purposes of public education?

In your community, who do you think shares your understanding of education?

Who, in your community, has a radically different understanding of education?

Can you think of educational programs or activities in your community that reflect the different goals?

What sectors of the community sponsor schools, i.e., public, religious, private?

What educational goals does each serve?

Is your community stratified by racial and ethnic heritage or socio-economic status in relation to educational goals?

How do these various schools interact with each other and impact on the community?

How are the educational goals determined in your community?

Who or what groups are included in the process?

Who or what groups are ignored or left out?

What process is used to select goals?

How do the goals and directions educational activity takes in your community differ from other communities with which you are acquainted — in the state, the nation, other parts of the world?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

Various church bodies, in recent years, have addressed the issue of the goals or direction of education. Following are excerpts from some of those statements.

"In these days many public school systems have been caught in the whirling social and educational changes of the times and have fallen victim to influences and powers which have not kept the fundamental purposes of the public schools as highest priorities.

"The issues confronting public schools may be different in respective communities, as the church is different in its respective communities. Yet, by virtue of its calling, the church must lead the communities in exploring the issues, and in identifying and seeking solutions to their particular problems."

Human Relations, The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 1976 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1977), pp. 68-69.

"Schools unavoidably teach or transmit a whole range of values. Many such values are shared by an entire community and pose no special problems to public schools. When values of various persons or groups in a community are in conflict, however, public schools often find themselves

caught in such conflict. It is not then the function of the schools to exalt one set of religiously-grounded values above another. Nor should the schools give the impression that values are simply a matter of personal choice, thereby promoting a view of moral relativity. . .

"Christian parents and the churches must assume their rightful responsibility for communicating their religious commitments and values to their children. The distinctiveness of these commitments and values should be neither promoted nor undermined by the manner of religious expression in the public schools."

Public Schools and Religious Practices: Statements Made or Supported by The American Lutheran Church on Religion in the Public Schools, Including School Prayer and Related Concerns (Minneapolis: Office of Church in Society, 1981), p. 3.

". . .Participation in efforts to strengthen and renew education for all children is a moral responsibility and a continuing work for every Christian. In this mission we affirm:

"That the opportunity for an education of high quality is the right of each child, is basic to the social, political, and economic health of our democracy, and is an indispensible preparation for life in an interdependent world.

"That the public has a moral obligation to provide opportunity for every child to exercise his or her right to such an education.

"That thoughtful (informed) participation in providing for the funding, operation and governance of public education is a continuing responsibility of every citizen.

"That education is more than schooling and must be accepted as the responsible function of home, church and community as well as the public schools."

"The Church and Public Education," Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA, *Church and Society*, Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979, p. 9.

Questions Christians Need To Ask

Following are some questions which may assist Christians in addressing their particular responsibility for elementary and secondary education.

How does a Christian's view of human nature and purpose influence the approach to educational goals?

- How does the Great Commandment – to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves – affect the priority we would give to different, perhaps conflicting, educational goals in our community?
- How does the question – Who is my neighbor? – affect our perception of global issues and their implications for the educational goals of our community?

How does a Christian act as a responsible public citizen?

- What does our Christian faith contribute to our understanding of how public policy decisions ought to be determined, and by whom?

What is the appropriate stance of the Christian community in a pluralistic world?

How do we negotiate with our neighbors who do not share our understanding of educational goals.?

How should Christians work through their churches to influence community decisions?

Resources for Further Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study materials may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

"America's Schools: Public and Private," *Daedalus* Special, Vol. 110, No. 3 (Summer 1981).

"The Church and Public Education," *Church and Society*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (November-December 1979).

"Education and Values." *Teachers College Record* Special, Vol. 80, No. 3 (Feb. 1979).

Bailey, Stephen K. *The Purposes of Education.* Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press, 1976.

Broudy, Harry S. *The Real World of the Public Schools.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

Cremin, Lawrence. *Public Education.* New York: Teachers College Press, 1978.

Goodlad, John I. *What Schools Are For.* Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press, 1979.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles. *The School Book.* New York: Delta Books, 1973.

Richards, Mary Caroline. *The Public School and the Education of the Whole Person.* United Church Board for Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Warford, Malcom L. *The Education of the Public.* United Church Board for Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

Following are some questions which may be useful to you as you move from discussion to action.

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the question: "Whose understanding of education gives direction to educational activity, or whose goals prevail?"

In light of this topic, what are the pressing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you – in your community, your church, your study group – as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

What strategies will you develop?

What will you do first?

What steps will you take?

What would you see the larger church doing – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches – in support of your educational mission?

FEEDBACK FORM ON WHOSE GOALS PREVAIL?

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, whose understanding of educational goals prevails, and which understandings predominate?

2. How are these goals expressed through public, private, and religious schools?

3. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate your priorities.)

tear-out

4. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe the goal and the steps briefly.

5. How do you see the Christian community's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

6. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent _____

_____

My denomination is _____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group _____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization) _____.

II. WHO ARE THE PARTNERS SHARING EDUCATIONAL WORK IN OUR COMMUNITY? WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION?

Clarifying the Issue

Schools – a major institution in our nation – have touched and affected the lives of almost all of us. Nearly everyone has been associated with a school at one or more points in their lives. It is not surprising, then, for us to associate education with schools and schooling. Indeed, the majority of children and youth in this country are enrolled in schools – public schools, religious schools and private schools.

When we think of people who have responsibility for educating, we usually think of teachers and other school personnel. Yet, the partners who have a stake and a say in the education that goes on in schools include more than teachers and school personnel. The partners include learners, teachers, parents, school administrators and staff, boards of education and citizens. Citizens participate as individuals, as members of special interest groups, and as members of the body politic.

Furthermore, if we understand that education can be seen as all the different ways we care for children and youth, then we begin to see that different institutions and persons are partners in education. Among those who assume care for children and youth are the family, religious institutions, the mass media, cultural institutions, voluntary associations (4-H, Girl Scouts, YMCA, to name a few), government agencies and institutions, as well as business and industry and labor unions as they provide products and services for young people.

With involvement by such a varied grouping of people and institutions, the resources available for education are staggering. Institutions providing those resources sometimes represent competing values and interests, opening the door for potential conflict.

As our knowledge of who provides education either intentionally or unintentionally expands, so, too, does the question of who is responsible for the education of children and youth.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

Questions for discussion:

In what ways are you involved in the work of education in your community?

Who are your partners in education?

Make up a list of the public, religious and private schools in your community. Who sponsors them? Who are the governing board members for each?

What are the facilities, classes and opportunities for learning outside the classroom?

Who else contributes to the growth and development of children and youth in your community?

In what ways are the partners in education – as individuals and as a group – compatible and mutually reinforcing of each other?

At what points are these roles in conflict?

What organizations in your community provide children and youth access to the cultural, physical, and social resources of the world?

Are these resources distributed equitably throughout the community? Is there equal access?

In what ways do the various schools (public, religious, and private) assist students to move beyond the classroom?

How is your community organized to protest or prevent the intrusion of those resources that are seen as educationally harmful?

Who is responsible for the protection of children and youth?

Who decides which influences are harmful?

Who do you think should be responsible for the education of children and youth?

Who do you think should be responsible? If more than one, rank in order of priority.

If there are conflicts or differences of opinion among those who are responsible for the teaching of children and youth, how should differences be resolved and whose rights should take precedence?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

"We affirm that parents have the primary responsibility under God for the education of their children, and have the right to determine whether that education shall be in a public or private (including church-sponsored) school."

"A Statement of Affirmation," Report to the Management Committee on Elementary and Secondary Schools Sponsored by Congregations or Groups of Congregations in the Lutheran Church in America (Philadelphia: Division for Parish Services, 1980).

"The issue of who controls education is often the basis of the conflict prevalent in our public schools and in our communities. In spite of the struggle for power and position among administrators, school boards, teachers, special interests, and local and state government, the educational needs of our children must be of prime concern. Every effort should be made by the public school system to involve citizens in educational planning and decision making, as well as keeping them informed about the issues."

"Public Education and the Public Schools," A Resolution Adopted by the General Convention of the American Baptist Churches (Valley Forge: American Baptist Churches 1979), p. 10.

"The educational mission is not directed to any single group within the Christian community of mankind. All have a role to play; all should have a voice in planning and directing."

To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1972), p. 42.

"Education is more than schooling and must be accepted as the responsibility of home, church and community as well as the public schools."

"Churches and Public Education," A Statement Approved by the Board of Educational Ministries, American Baptist Churches, June 1979.

"In order to reaffirm public schools, the church...must accept responsibility for influencing changes in the life and conduct of schools, and for providing supplemental learning experineces for children and youth.... Classroom learning may be either enhanced or eroded by a child's experiences in family, neighborhood, church and other community experiences. To inspire, to create, to adapt, and to enlarge the constructive learning opportunities for a child is the work of many and the responsibility of all."

"The Church and Public Education," Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA, *Church and Society,* Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979, p. 54.

"Major growth has...produced new problems in the governance of education. There has been a development of large educational systems...and increased involvement of state and federal administrators in special programs. These two factors have combined to make it more difficult for parents and taxpayers to overcome the distance which has opened between them and those persons chosen to manage or govern schools."

"The Church and Public Education," Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA, *Church and Society,* Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979, p. 50.

Questions Christians Need To Ask

How have Christians in your community traditionally perceived their responsibility as partners in education?

How can the Church maintain its responsibility for neighbors within the larger community who, because of race, economic hardships, or family background, do not have equal access to educational resources?

How does our Christian understanding equip us for the difficult task of making judgments and influencing choices about what are helpful or harmful educational influences?

How does the Church work out its role as a partner in education?

Resources for Further Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study materials may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

"Families and Communities as Educators." *Teachers College Record* Special Edition, Vol. 79, No. 3 (May 1978).

Barth, Ronald S. *Run School Run.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, 1980.

Davies, Don, ed. *Communities and Their Schools.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981.

Donley, Marshall O., Jr. *Power to the Teacher: How America's Educators Became Militant.* Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Dyer, Henry. *How to Achieve Accountability in the Public Schools.* Fastback Series, No. 14. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Fantini, Mario. *The People and Their Schools: Community Partiicpation.* Fastback Series, No. 62. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press, 1975.

L'Engle, Madeleine, *The Anit-Muffins.* New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Leichter, Hope Jensen. *The Public School and the Family.* United Church Board of Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1975.

Macroff, Gene I. *Don't Blame the Kids: The Trouble with America's Public Schools.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.

National Committee for Citizens in Education. *Who Controls the Schools?* Columbia, MD: NCCE, 1978.

Smith, B. Othaniel and Orlosky, Donald. *Socialization and Schooling: The Basics of Reform.* Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the questions: "Who Are the Partners Sharing Educational Work in Our Community? Who Is Responsible for Education?"

In light of this topic, what are the pressing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you – in your community, your church, your study group – as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

What strategies will you develop?

What will you do first?

What steps will you take?

What would you see the larger church doing – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches – in support of your educational mission?

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FEEDBACK FORM ON: WHO ARE THE PARTNERS IN EDUCATION?

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, who has been designated as responsible for education, and who is doing the actual educating of children and youth?

2. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate your order of priorities.)

3. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe the goal and steps briefly.

4. How do you see the Christian community's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

5. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent _____

_____

My denomination is _____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group _____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization) _____.

III. WHO BENEFITS OR PROFITS FROM EDUCATION IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Clarifying the Issue

At first glance, the answer to the question: "Who benefits or profits from education in our community?" seems obvious. Students benefit from education, but they are not the only ones who benefit from education and educational activity.

- Students benefit as they develop the knowledge and skills, attitudes and values which equip them for productive living. But not all students benefit equally from education. Children and youth are not all the same. Many factors, including social, economic and physiological ingredients, contribute to the development of varying capabilites, motivations or interests in education. Therefore, children and youth derive benefits which differ in kind and in degree. Not all children and youth have legal access to educational opportunity – particularly racial minorities, urban and rural poor, those for whom English is a second language, the physically and emotionally handicapped.
- Teachers, administrators, and staff receive income, retirement, and other personal benefits. They also receive benefits associated with personal success, professional achievement, and public service. Many also love working with children and youth and gain many intrinsic rewards.
- Parents and the community receive the benefit of having their children formally educated by professionals, socialized in the context of the wider community, prepared for jobs and responsibilities in the adult world, and cared for during a substantial portion of their waking hours.
- All of those providing goods and services for the educational enterprise benefit economically. Society itself benefits from the education of children and youth.
- The economy benefits as children and youth learn the skills and attitudes which prepare them to participate in the work world.
- The culture benefits as children and youth develop musical, aesthetic, and literary interests and sensibilities.
- The political process benefits as children and youth are inculcated with the skills, attitudes, and values essential for effective citizenship.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

What do you understand equal educational opportunity to mean?

Do children and youth in your community have equal access to educational opportunities and, therefore, the equal possibility of deriving the same benefits from education?

What factors assure or mitigate against equality?

Does the goal of equal opportunity see the educational system trying to compensate for the social inequalities in society?

Does it seek to equip students to compete on an equal basis when they leave school?

Does equal opportunity refer to the entry or exit point of schools?

Do some children and young people in your community appear to benefit more from education than others?

If so, how do you account for the difference?

Do the schools increase or diminish the difference?

Business, industry, professional educators, elected and appointed political officials, parents, etc., benefit from education. In what ways do the benefits of those who are not students influence or determine the way education is conducted?

Whose needs take precedence – those of students or others?

How could the educational wealth – and thus its benefits – be more fairly distributed in your community?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

"The needs of people as individuals and their collective needs as members of communities are not always identical. The total educational needs required to solve or reduce a major community problem are different from the individual educational needs of the people who comprise the community....Related as the two may be, their solution and their identification require different approaches. We should be involved and concerned primarily with the identification of community needs, with realization that individuals comprise the community."

"A.M.E. Church and Education," Section VI, *A.M.E. Working Papers II: God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Man Our Brother* (New Orleans: General Conference Committee on Working Papers II, 1980), pp. 25-26.

"This crisis comes at a time when education is understood and acted upon as a 'right' of each child. No other society has ever attempted to do what is being attempted in this society – schooling for all persons, including those who were previously ignored or excluded because of race, class, sex, physical handicaps, learning disabilities or being unusually gifted.... Although the educational goal for all children and youth has not been realized by any means, the significance of the progress and accomplishment should be valued and not underestimated."

The Church and the Public School: A Position Paper of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries (New York: United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1981), p. 8.

"...A congregation has the right to establish an elementary or secondary school...when the necessity for that service is clearly defined and when such schools are open to all without distinction as to race, creed, national origin or economic status....Under no circumstances should a congregation establish or maintain an elementary or secondary school in order to provide racially segregated education facilities."

"A Statement of Affirmation," *A Report to the Management Committee on Elementary and Secondary Schools Sponsored by Congregations or Groups of Congregations in the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Division for Parish Services, 1980).

Questions Christians Need To Ask

As Christian citizens, what do we understand to be the meaning of justice?

How does this understanding inform the concept of equal educational opportunity?

Who in our community are the educationally poor – who are those who derive few benefits from the various sectors providing education in our community?

What is our responsibility for them as Christian citizens?

How can we influence a more equitable distribution of educational benefits in our community?

What educational wealth does the church community possess?

How can we make it available for the benefit of the community?

What is our community's relationship to other communities and resources in the surrounding area, either metropolitan or rural?

In that larger context, what part does the Church play in the distribution of educational resources and benefits?

Resources for Futher Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study materials may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

Fernandez, Happy Craven. *The Child Advocacy Handbook.* New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Grant, Carl A., Boyle, Marilynne, and Sleeter, Christine E. *The Public School and the Challenge of Ethnic Pluralism.* United Church Board of Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Hentoff, Nat. *Does Anybody Give a Damn.* New York: Knopf, 1977.

Johnson, Henry C., Jr. *The Public School and Moral Education.* United Church Board of Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Kraushar, Otto F. *Private Schools: From the Puritans to the Present.* Fastback Series, No. 78. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Morris, Barbara M. "The Real Issues in Education," *Phi Delta Kappan,* May 1980.

National Committee for Citizens in Education. *The Rights of Parents in the Education of Their Children.* Columbia, MD: NCCE, 1977.

Park, Charles. "Preachers, Politics and Public Education." *Phi Delta Kappan,* May 1980.

Stanley, Manfred. *The Public School and Public Policy.* United Church Board for Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Thomas, M. Donald. *Parents Have Rights, Too!* Fastback Series, No. 120. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Thomas, M. Donald. *Pluralism Gone Mad.* Fastback Series, No. 160. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the question: "Who Benefits or Profits from Education in Our Community?"

In light of this topic, what are the pressing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you – in your community, your church, your study group – as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

What strategies will you develop?

What will you do first?

What steps will you take?

What would you see the larger church doing – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches – in support of your educational mission?

tear-out

FEEDBACK FORM ON: WHO BENEFITS FROM EDUCATION?

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, who is benefiting or profiting from the education of children and youth?

2. Is justice being done in the distribution of educational wealth?

3. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate your order of priorities.)

4. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe briefly in steps.

5. How do you see the Christian's or the Church's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

6. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent_____

_____

My denomination is_____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group_____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization)_____.

IV. WHO PAYS FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Clarifying the Issue

Educating children and youth requires the expenditure of time and energy, along with the use of the specialized skills and resources of a variety of people. Time and energy must be paid for or compensated in some way. The skills of all the partners in education must be developed and nurtured. The materials essential to education must be produced and distributed. At issue in the responsible conduct of education is not only who pays for it, but how much of the resources of the society – including time, energy, skills, and money – are to be devoted to it.

The costs of education through schooling have been paid for largely in three ways:

- Public schools have been tax supported, usually through local property taxes, but increasingly with forms of state aid, and often federal aid.
- Private schools are usually paid for by tuition payments, endorsements and special gifts, though public monies subsidize some services.
- Parochial and religious schools are usually financed through a combination of tuition payments, contributions from the church, and the contribution of the services of members of religious orders and volunteers. Public monies subsidize some services also, such as transportation.

The costs of education beyond schooling are borne in a variety of ways:

- Families often bear the cost directly of the education they provide.
- Voluntary associations and cultural institutions are supported through voluntary contributions, government subsidies and the payments of fees for services.
- The costs of educational resources and services provided by the mass media and business and industry are borne by consumers and advertisers.

Paramount in the discussion of who pays for education is the issue of justice.

- Some people believe that the education of children and youth is a national priority which ought to be entirely tax supported and should have a high claim on tax revenues.
- Some believe that they are unduly burdened by the costs of tax supported education, concluding that as little public monies as possible should be allocated to schooling and educational resources.
- Some question the management of existing funds, concluding that they should be more efficiently and/or equitably used.
- Some believe that the primary support of public education through property taxes contributes to inequality of educational opportunity and achievement in poorer communities, and that a new basis of raising and allocating public monies for education ought to be devised.
- Some believe that, along with the freedom to choose alternatives

to public schooling, should go the obligation of paying its entire cost; just as there are those who believe that there should be tax relief for those who elect to provide alternative schooling for their children and young people.

- Some believe that a whole range of human and educational resources and services not available or accessible to children and youth who are disadvantaged or otherwise handicapped should be made available by the society.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

What educational issues are currently being discussed and debated in your community?

Which ones have gained the attention of the press and the media recently?

How do issues of financial support and the allocation of resources figure in the discussion?

What priority do such considerations appear to have in the decision-making process?

What are the criteria by which the allocation of educational resources – personnel, equipment, money – takes place in your community?

What is the process by which such criteria are determined?

Who takes part; who is left out or ignored? Why? Finally, who decides?

Are all of the various schools in your community being supported equitably – in terms of personnel, equipment, money?

Have there been cut-backs in funding for education? What kinds of programs are being reduced or eliminated? Are increases in funds available in any areas?

How are these decisions being made?

Who, what groups are most directly affected?

Are schools and their personnel funded at levels which you would consider reasonable to insure professional standards.

Is the value you place on education reflected in funding the institutions of education?

What value do you think your community places on education?

Are there significant differences? Why?

What do you see happening to the funding for all educational activity in your community in the future?

What planning is being done to shape or influence the future?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

"Elementary and secondary education has, for economic and public policy considerations, become largely a public school monopoly....Persons disenchanted with the public school system, however, look for viable alternatives....Christian citizens seek to sift out the truth....They try to provide a constructive critique of public schools, giving neither thoughtless condemnation nor thoughtless endorsement to whatever develops."

"Christian Concern for General Education," Statement of the Seventh General Convention of the American Lutheran Church, Section 6, adopted October 12, 1974:

"The General Assembly...calls upon its members and upon all citizens to work to eliminate inequities in our educational systems, especially those inequities of facilities and personnel provided to particular constituencies through: (1) support of programs for the equitable distribution of funds, facilities and personnel among all schools of a system; (2) support of pupils, parents and community groups seeking a greater voice in maintaining and improving the quality of education in their community schools; (3) and support of alternatives to the property-tax base for financing schools so that neither the poor nor the affluent are penalized because of the neighborhood in which they live."

"Resolution No. 55: Concerning Quality Public Education in the United States," adopted October, 1971, Louisville General Assembly, 1972 Yearbook and Directory (Indianapolis: General Office of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)), pp. 195 196.

"Most recently public education systems have been caught by...the end of the 'baby boom' and the inadequacy of educational funding....The galloping rate of inflation and the mandate to provide suitable programs for the handicapped and the culturally disadvantaged are making heavy demands.... In addition, it simply costs more each year to provide an education of quality and breadth....Many school boards and their school superintendents have difficulty in coping with the failure of their income to keep up with rising costs....The 'tax rebellion' of those who are struggling with inflation, rising property valuation and fixed annual income is compounding the problem for school systems. Public school officials are required to make reductions that are not determined by clear definitions of society's educational goals."

"The Church and Public Education," Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA, *Church and Society*, Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979, pp. 50-51.

Questions Christians Need To Ask

As Christian citizens, what kind of a world do we want to help construct?

What knowledge, skills and values will children and youth need to acquire to live in and contribute to the building of such a world?

Who should pay for public education?

Are the educational costs of one sector of society borne by another sector?

Are there social costs paid by those who do not receive enough of the educational resources?

What is our role in the community to ensure that educational resources are collected and allocated equitably for the education of all children and youth?

When Christians are responsible public citizens, do they see the demands upon public monies differently from other people?

How do we resolve those differences?

Should those who pay more taxes receive more services?

Should education be a place to equalize the differences between the rich and the poor?

How can we, as Christians and churches, support and supplement the education which children and youth receive in schools and in the community?

How can we do it so that it not only benefits "our own" children, but also those neighbors most needful of our caring and concern?

Resources for Further Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study materials may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

AFL-CIO. *Financing the Schools: An AFL-CIO View.* Washington, D.C., 1979.

Benson, Charles. *Equity in School Financing: Full State Funding.* Fastback Series, No. 56. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Benson, Charles, and Shannon, Thomas A. *Schools Without Property Taxes: Hope or Illusion?* Fastback No. 1. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Hersh, Rhoda E. *The School Budget.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1979.

Guthrie, James. *Equity in School Financing: District Power Equalizing.* Fastback Series, No. 57. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Williams, Mary Frase. *The Public School and Finances.* United Church Board for Homeland Ministries Series. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the question: "Who Pay for the Education of Children and Youth in Our Community?"

In light of this topic, what are the pessing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you — in your community, your church, your study group — as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

What strategies will you develop?

What will you do first?

What steps will you take?

What would you see the larger church doing — your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches — in support of your educational mission?

tear-out

FEEDBACK FORM ON: WHO PAYS FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, who is paying for the education of children and youth?

2. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate an order of priority.)

3. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe briefly in steps.

4. How do you see the Christian's or the Church's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church — your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

5. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent_____

_____

My denomination is_____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group_____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization)_____.

V. WHAT METHODS, MATERIALS, AND PROCEDURES ARE NECESSARY FOR EDUCATION IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Clarifying the Issue

Selection of methods, materials and procedures gives concrete expression to the values of the decision-makers.

- The differing *methods* reflect varied points of view among educators about how learning takes place.
- The differing *materials* reflect varied points of view about what tools or resources are most useful in teaching and learning and what should be included and excluded from the curriculum.
- The differing *procedures* used in educational institutions or systems reflect varied understandings of who people are and varied sensitivities about their needs and rights.

Of course, more than qualitative considerations go into the development of various methods, materials, and procedures. Judgments about such things as what is most effective, efficient and economical get incorporated also.

Just as educational methods, materials, and procedures are designed to achieve particular aims, choices of which ones to use or follow also reflect the values and goals of those educational partners who have an active role in their selection.

In considering educational methods, materials, and procedures, a number of concerns need to be kept in mind.

Methods, materials, and procedures are subject to human conditions which may enhance or inhibit their effectiveness.

- They are influenced by the particular skills, attitudes and commitments of the people and institutions who create and who use them.
- They are influenced by the kind and quality of resources which are made available to produce and support them.
- They are influenced by prevailing ideologies which govern their content.

On the other hand, methods, materials, and procedures influence the nature and quality of educational activity in a community.

- The choice of educational methods designed, for reasons of efficiency, to meet broad educational needs, may short-change children and youth with special learning needs.
- Selection of materials, for reasons of habit, fad or conviction, that rely too much on one mode of learning, or admit one point of view, or promote one ethnic group, may limit seriously the educational development of children and youth.
- The adoption of institutional procedures that unduly emphasize freedom or confirmity may result in chaos or in stifling of creativity. Procedures may be either supportive or repressive.

Methods, materials, and procedures also reveal community values, attitudes, patterns of decision-making and participation, and the state of human relationships.

Lack of participation of any partners in the selection process, or domination of the process by any one of the partners, can result in the educational needs and desires of portions of the community not being met.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

What do you know about the methods, materials, and procedures used for the education of children and youth in your community?

How did you learn about them?

In what forum are your community's methods, materials, and procedures discussed, determined, and evaluated?

Who makes the actual decisions? What is the attitude toward new developments in methods and materials?

As you look at the educational resources and materials available in your community, as well as at the way education is organized, whose interests would you say are served?

What methods, materials, and procedures are being used to explore and enhance the multi-cultural reality of your community? To explore the human diversity and cultural pluralism of the world?

What channels are open to educational partners in your community for influencing educational procedures and organization?

How can citizens – as individuals and groups – use the selection of materials, methods, and procedures to demonstrate unmet needs and opportunities for growth?

How can conflicting views of conduct and methodology be approached constructively as an affirmation of pluralism? How can underlying assumptions about the nature of truth be exposed? How can the selection of methods, materials, and procedures be used to clarify understandings of the scope of the curriculum?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

"We encourage each local church to recognize the importance of the culture, history, and important contributions of ethnic minorities to the education process and the resulting loss when these are omitted from the curriculum....The lack of opportunities to learn and understand the history and cultures of all races is reflected in our present problems in human relations."

"Human Relations," *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 1976* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1977), p. 69.

"The primary responsibility for the development of moral values in children must be given to the home....Second to the home, the churches and religious groups bear major responsibility for the teaching of morals and ethics....Although the public schools have traditionally and will continue to stress moral development, we must carefully scrutinize the abilities of the schools to respond to the present apparent weakening of moral

values in our society. The public schools can never repair the damage caused to children by the failure of parents to instill strong moral values in the early years of a child's life."

"Ethical Teachings of Jesus in Public Schools," Report of the Study Committee, Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, June 1977, p. 7.

"It is clear that the school has to review its entire program of formation, both its content and the methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiriation and on which it depends."

The Catholic School, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, March 1977).

Questions Christians Need To Ask

What does the integrity of method, quality of materials and cogency of procedural matters say to children and youth about values in the educational process?

In what ways does the learning environment support or hinder the educational process?

What uniquely Christian values are being expressed or not expressed?

What standards do you use to evaluate the efficacy of a particular method or material or procedure?

Are there points of conflict between your sense of Christian stewardship of resources and your sense of responsibility as a citizen in the pluralistic community?

How do you resolve such differences?

How can Christian citizens and churches give leadership to the discussion of methods, materials, and procedures in a community where differing values make the selection process painful?

Resources for Further Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study material may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

Becker, James. *Education for a Global Society.* Fastback Series, No. 28. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Benjamin, Robert. *Making Schools Work.* New York: Continuum, 1981.

Council on Interracial Books for Children. *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin.* Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc., 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10123.

Church of the Brethren. *Ethical Teachings of Jesus in Public Schools.* Elgin, Il.: Church of the Brethren, 1977.

Dyer, Henry. *Parents Can Understand Testing.* Columbia, Md: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1980.

Flygare, Thomas. *The Legal Rights of Students.* Fastback Series, No. 59. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Flygare, Thomas. *The Legal Rights of Teachers.* Fastback Series, No. 83. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Garcia, Ricardo. *Learning in Two Languages.* Fastback Series, Nos. 84 and 84s (English and Spanish editions). Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Jenkinson, Edward B. *Censors in the Classroom: The Mind Benders.* New York: Avons Books, 1979.

McCarty, Joan and Mizell, Hayes. *Everybody's Business: A Book About School Discipline.* Southeastern Public Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee, 1980.

Rioux, J. William et al. *You Can Improve Your Child's School.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980.

Smith, Burke and Barr. *Optional Alternative Public Schools.* Fastback Series, No. 42. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Warshaw, Thayer, Ed. *Reviews of Curricular and Resource Materials.* National Council on Religion and Public Edication, 1200 Oread, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. 1981.

Wicks, Robert S. *Morality and the Schools.* Occasional Paper, No. 32. Council for Basic Education, 725 15th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. 1981.

Wilhelms, Fred. *What Should Schools Teach?* Fastback Series, No. 13. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the question: "What Methods, Materials and Procedures are Necessary for Education in Our Community?"

In light of this topic, what are the pressing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you — in your community, your church, your study group — as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

What strategies will you develop?

What will you do first?

What steps will you take?

What would you see the larger church doing — your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches — in support of your educational mission?

tear-off

FEEDBACK FORM ON: WHAT METHODS, MATERIALS, AND PROCEDURES ARE NECESSARY?

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, what methods, materials, and procedures are being used and who selects them?

2. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate an order of priority.)

3. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe briefly in steps.

4. How do you see the Christian's or the Church's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

5. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent _____

_____

My denomination is _____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group _____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization) _____.

VI. HOW CAN WE ASCERTAIN THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN OUR OWN COMMUNITY?

Clarifying the Issue

What a community sees as quality education reflects what the community wants its various members to become.

People's expectations of the education process depend on their values — what they see as necessary and valuable for citizenship, moral development, mature human relationships, personal growth and work-related skills. (It might be helpful at this point to review the discussion of the first unit of this guide.)

Once these basic values determine what is expected, a community can ask what is actually being achieved in its schools.

- Are students learning what the community wants them to learn?
- Are teachers doing their job?
- Are educational goals being met satisfactorily? If not, why not?

Generalized dissatisfaction is often a function of vague and conflicting goals. If assessment results do not ring true, it is more likely that goals must be reevaluated than that the assessment itself is faulty.

To succeed, quality education must be available to every person. People's needs and abilities differ, as do their perceptions of their needs and abilities. Often a community must juggle many important, but different, needs. Variety, flexibility and accessibility can help meet such differences. Some needs require very special programs. Clearly stated values are important, especially in probing issues such as assimilation, pluralism, equality of access and equality of results.

In assessing the quality of education, the learning environment of the school must be seen in the context of the whole community and the larger society. Family values and structures are frequently cited; less often community influences such as social satisfaction, transportation systems, housing patterns, after-school programs, recreation facilities and libraries are seen as supportive or non-supportive of education.

Educational quality has commonly been measured by scores on standardized tests which are designed and interpreted by professionals. Quality is the responsibility and concern of everyone, however, not just professional educators. Sometimes quality is measured by college admissions or by job offers. It is far more complex and subtle than most numerical reports of where students go when they graduate. Understanding other ways to assess success is one step toward responding to community concern for educational quality.

Seeing the Issue in Local Perspective

What are the goals of education established for children and youth who go to school in your community?

Are specific expectations different for different groups in your community?

Are some groups expected to pursue "vocational" objectives, while other groups are expected to pursue "academic" ones?
Is this good, or is it unfair discrimination?

Who benefits from the educational programs currently existing in your community?

Are there existing ways to help children and youth who might need special assistance to benefit more fully?

How is educational performance measured and judged in your community?

Who selected the tools or tests? How is their suitability determined?
What is done with test and measurement results?
How do results affect planning for individuals, for groups?

How do you assess education in your community?

How well are resources of your community being used.
How important are the resources and educational partners outside the school system to the achievement of these educational goals?
How can you build into your assessment of educational activity a global awareness?
Do curriculum resources used in your community prepare people for the future?
Do they encourage critical thinking? Reflective thinking? Lifelong learning?

What Some Church Bodies Have Said About the Issue

"Quality integrated education is the right of each child, is basic to the social, political and economic health of our democracy, and is an indispensible preparation for life in an interdependent world."

"Churches and Public Education," A Statement Approved by the Board of Educational Ministries, American Baptist Churches, June 1979.

"A school is...a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs....Indeed, culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the personal development of its pupils."

The Catholic School, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, March 1977), p. 9.

"In broad general outline, general education which meets the needs of both parents and of the community aims at helping children and youth: acquire basic knowledge and skills...; think and reason logically...; understand the customs, ideas and beliefs which unite the community and

undergird the responsibilities of citizenship; grow in their well-rounded development as individuals...; prepare themselves with skills and training for taking places in the workaday world...; appreciate the excitement and the possibilities in human life and relationships...; and build character and integrity...."

"Christian Concern for General Education," Statement of the Seventh General Convention of the American Lutheran Church, adopted October 12, 1974.

"Faced with a variety of forms of abandonment and with extensive criticism, the establishment and maintenance of effective integrated public schools becomes a first order of business for both the church and society. This is based on our affirmation that each child has a right to an education which recognizes, rather than obscures, the ethnic, racial, and religious pluralism of American Life and which prepared the child for the emerging inclusive world culture of the Twenty-First Century. This commitment is further based on our belief that the public school has been and remains a corner-stone of our democratic society. Churches and church members must join with others in their communities to create opportunities which prepare every child for a fulfilling life."

"The Church and Public Education," Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA, *Church and Society*, Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979, p. 53.

Questions Christians Need To Ask

As Christians, how is our concern for persons and hope for the future applicable to the issues of quality?

In an immediate sense?
In a long-term sense?

How does our Christian view of love manifest itself in our approach to those who differ from us or who have special needs?

How does such a concern fit into the question of quality education for all people?

As Christians, do we seek an educational experience which explores the fullness of God's world and universe?

How can our local education program benefit from a Christian perspective on the depth and breadth of the learning experience?
How does the concept of measuring the quality of education fit with the perspective of breadth and depth?

Resources for Further Study

Listed below are resources which you may find helpful for further study of this issue. Many of the books and journals may be available in your public or university libraries. Other study materials may need to be ordered directly from the publisher.

AFS. *A Citizen's Introduction to Minimum Competency Programs for Students*, American Friends Service Committee, 1979.

Brodkinsky, Ben. *Defining the Basics of American Education.* Fastback Series, No. 95. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Estes, Nolan. *Murshalling Community Leadership to Support Public Schools.* Fastback Series, No. 35. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Hasazi, Rice, and York. *Mainstreaming: Merging Regular and Special Edication.* Fastback Series, No. 124. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

NAIS. *The Strengths of a Good School Faculty: Notes on Evaluation, Growth and Professional Partnership of Teachers.* National Association of Independent Schools, 4 Liberty Square, Boston, Mass. 02109. (1975)

NCCE. *Parents Can Understand Testing.* Columbia, MD: National Committee of Citizens in Education, 1980.

NCCE. *Your School: How Well Is It Working? A Citizen's Guide to School Evaluation.* Columbia, MD: National Committee of Citizens in Education, 1982.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner, Charles. *How to Recognize a Good School.* Fastback Series, No. 30. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Reigel, Rodney P. and Lovell, Ned B. *Minimum Competency Testing.* Fastback Series, No. 137. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

Woodring, Paul. *Who Should Go to College?* Fastback Series, No. 10. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Press.

"The Church and Public Education," *Church and Society.* Vol. LXX, No. 2, November-December, 1979.

"Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?" Phi Delta Kappan Foundation, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Determining a Course of Action and Advocacy

What changes in perception and attitudes have taken place in your group as a result of your discussion and study of the question: "How Can We Ascertain the Quality of Education in Our Community?"

In light of this topic, what are the pressing issues in your community which ought to be addressed, and in what order of priority?

What action do you plan to take, and why?

What is your goal? What are your specific objectives?

Who are the potential allies and what resources are available to you — in your community, your church, your study group — as you seek to address this issue and to live out your educational mission? Are there other groups or churches with whom you could join forces?

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What would you see the larger church doing — your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the National Council of Churches — in support of your educational mission?

tear-out

FEEDBACK FORM ON: HOW WE ASCERTAIN QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Please summarize your own or your group's discussion and answers to the following questions. Your thoughts will assist the National Council of the Churches of Christ and your own denomination as they seek to determine how they can best support local action and build the future of education in our society. Return this tear-off sheet to: Education in the Society, NCCC, Room 710, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050.

1. In your community, how is the quality of education ascertained?

2. What are the pressing issues which should be addressed? (Please indicate an order of priority.)

3. Did you develop a plan of action? Please describe briefly in steps.

4. How do you see the Christian's or the Church's responsibility for educational direction? (Please include your specific suggestions regarding the larger church – your local ecumenical council or agency, your denomination, the NCCC.)

5. Has working through this topic been a good experience? In what way? Do you have suggestions about this guide?

Name and address of respondent _____

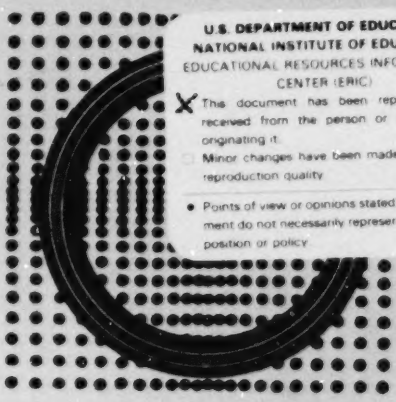
_____

My denomination is _____.

I am responding as an individual. ☐ Number of people in my group _____.

I am responding on behalf of (name of organization) _____.

A Document Commended to the Churches for Study and Discussion*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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A CALL TO THE CHURCHES TO ENGAGE THE ISSUES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN STUDY AND ACTION

Public education has moved to center stage in our national life because of a series of commission reports and studies which have pointed to deficiencies in our public school system and which have made substantive recommendations for improvements. Some of these reports are political documents designed to mobilize special interest groups. Some are calls to greater technological progress and economic productivity in the face of intense international competition. Some are studies of the process of learning, standards for student and teacher performance, and the role and recompense of teachers. All have served to demonstrate the crisis in education in our country. As a result, public schools have become a major issue on our national agenda for the first time since the launching of Sputnik.

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Margaret L. Shafer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

We invite church people to take part in the public's discussion of education. The home, the church and the school have traditionally been society's advocates for children. We believe this is a significant moment for church people to express our biblical and theological perspectives on the sacred worth of human life and to voice our concerns for enabling all persons to grow to full maturity and for promoting justice, truth and the common good.

The text which follows advocates no particular solutions to the crisis in education. Rather it seeks to identify some issues within the crisis cited by the various national reports and to suggest aspects of those issues which warrant the church's careful scrutiny.

1) The Learner. Learners and what happens to them in the classroom are of central importance in education. What steps can communities take to enhance the quality of the instruction; the teacher/student relationship; the school climate; the valuing of each person in the school community; the student's participation in the learning process? Should heavy emphasis be placed on statistical measurements of educational success? How can test scores be utilized diagnostically to help students rather than simply label them and assign them to a track?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

2) **The Educator.** Teachers and administrators, along with school boards, carry on the daily task of educating the public. Reports have suggested that the prevailing level of compensation is not appropriate to the level of responsibility which educational professionals have been given; that working conditions are not what they ought to be; that teachers' non-instructional activities are not effectively assigned. How best can effective professionals be recruited, trained, and licensed? Should there be changes in performance criteria and evaluations, tenure, and dismissal procedures? Is performance based compensation a solution to problems in the public schools? How can professional growth and community respect be increased?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

3) **Families.** The commission reports have paid little attention to the role which families can play in the education of students, yet family involvement is known to enhance a student's learning and development. Churches are one of society's most strategically placed institutions for promoting parental involvement in students' learning and for providing support for those without family strengths. Is this an area where the church can influence society's view of the educational process? Is this an area where the church can enter the discussion on public education concerns?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

4) **Financing Education.** Free public schools have been an important part of the American tradition. They have provided a common experience and equality of opportunity. Free access to the

educational system has been one of the foundations of our free society. The entire system has represented a major investment by society in improving individual lives and the common good. However, public support for the system now seems to be shrinking. Quality education cannot simply be equated with dollars spent; on the other hand, public schools cannot be maintained without substantial investment. Where should the money come from? What proportion of responsibility do district, state, and federal governments have for funding education? What is necessary to persuade taxpayers that educational dollars continue to be a sound societal investment?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

5) **Elementary/Secondary.** The prime focus of many of the national reports is the secondary school. Discussion concerning high school curricula and reforms, standards for high school promotion and graduation, and methods for delivering and administering high school programs is certainly in order. However, any thorough-going discussion of the learning system needs also to consider what is happening in the elementary school. Which strengths of the elementary school can inform discussions of the upper grades? Which weaknesses of the middle school and high school have their roots in early school experiences?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

6) **Literacy and Learning to Think.** Some national reports limit the goals of education to narrow definitions of literacy and linguistic competence--the skills of reading and writing. Others call for increased learning of foreign languages, but question the appropriate-

ness of bilingual education. Definitions of literacy may begin with "learning to read English", but should they be expanded to include "learning to read additional languages?" And beyond teaching simple reading, should teachers be challenging students to comprehend the ideas of another person and to think critically about them? Definitions of literacy may also begin with "learning to spell and to write correct grammar", but should they expand to include "learning to express well-conceived, well-developed and creative thought?" Where English is a student's second language (as is the case with millions of students), should schools be fostering bilingual literacy?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

7) **Pressures on Curriculum.** National reports have highlighted a need for greater emphasis in school curricula on math and science and high technology programs. Will most students, as some reports assume, eventually work in high-tech fields? In addition to teaching computer literacy, should school curricula include attention to the issues of how new technologies have an impact on our personal and social lives? For example, what will be the effects of high technology on social class, the control of society, and personal privacy? How can students be educated for assuming the ethical and civic responsibility for dealing with such issues? Will emphasis on math, science and high technology in school curricula inevitably mean that less time and fewer dollars are available for teaching the humanities and arts? Information separated from values is dangerous. In the quest for the meaning of life, education needs to deal with many aspects of culture including religion. Is it possible that today's students need education about values and

religion as much as they need education about technology? How can the study of religion be an integral part of public education without becoming entangled in state-sponsored devotional practices or in sectarian teachings?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

8) **Competitiveness.** Many national reports stress the role of schools in preparing students for work and industry. Some even suggest that the primary reason for improving students' skills is to increase the nation's economic productivity and to achieve a more dominant position in global economic competition. Does such an emphasis on skills for the sake of industry and international competition express a narrower view of the value of persons than we want to hold? How can schools balance education for competitiveness with education for cooperation? Does not education have a role in preparing students to appreciate persons of diverse cultural and national origins and to become partners with them in conserving the world's resources and in distributing these resources equitably?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

9) **Research.** An enterprise as large as education needs a solid research base. Much more needs to be known and made known about how successful learning takes place; how a teacher best functions within the learning process; what makes a school effective; and what the appropriate role of technology is. In order to understand the changing needs of education in a dynamic social environment, we need the best information possible. Accordingly, major research efforts and the dissemination of results are needed

to inform policy decisions in education and to develop effective methods of teaching. The need for research transcends local and state boundaries. Who should bear the responsiblity for financing such research? Who should bear the responsibility for making use of the results of the research?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

10) **Equity and Social Justice.** An expressed concern for social equity in public education is significantly absent from most national reports. Progress has been made but not completed in providing equal access to quality education for many who have previously been excluded. Does the lack of concern for this goal in the published reports reflect a lack of national commitment to excellent education for handicapped persons, minority groups, and today's lower classes? Is working to insure equal access sufficient, or do we need to take responsibility for compensatory education? Federal aid for equity programs has been drastically cut. Are such cuts acceptable?

HOW DO CHURCH PEOPLE SEE THESE ISSUES? HOW CAN CHURCHES HELP?

We call upon church people to discuss* and to determine what they can and should do about public education. We call upon churches to consider their own role and that of the institutions of education in the whole human learning system in this time of major social change. Further, we call upon churches to establish partnerships with public schools and other institutions which affect the lives of children and

youth, so that the needed support can be consolidated, and the envisioned reforms can be achieved.

*A guide for discussing six underlying issues in public education--Goals, Partners, Benefits, Financing, Methods, and Evaluation--is available in the booklet CRITICAL ISSUES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION: A Discussion Guide for Christians. It is available @ $2.50 from the address below.

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To receive additional copies of this pamphlet send self-addressed stamped envelope for single free copy. Additional copies 15¢. Reduced rate for bulk orders.

This document grew out of a directive from the Program Committee of the Education in the Society unit of the National Council of Churches of Christ to prepare a church response to the reports coming out of several national commissions relating to public education. It was developed at a Consultation on the Church and Public Education held at Deering, NH in July 1983. It was refined by the Public Education Task Force and issued by the Program Committee following its meeting on November 17, 1983.